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Letter dated 31 January 2008 from the Secretary-General to the President of the Security Council

I would like to refer to Security Council resolution 1793 (2007), by which the Council requested me to submit for its consideration by 31 January 2008 a completion strategy for the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL), including: (a) at least a 20 per cent reduction in staff by 31 March 2008; (b) a continued mission at 80 per cent of the strength as at 21 December 2007 until 30 June 2008; and (c) the termination of the UNIOSIL mandate by 30 September 2008. In the same resolution, the Council also requested me to ensure that UNIOSIL maintains adequate capacity, expertise and resources to implement its mandate of providing assistance to the 2008 local government elections and national institutions promoting good governance and human rights, as well as supporting the work of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund. Accordingly, the Secretariat, in cooperation with UNIOSIL, has developed a completion strategy that takes into account the Council's request to ensure that the mission has sufficient remaining capacity to complete its mandated tasks.

Completion strategy of the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone

Reduction in staff by 31 March 2008

The authorized staffing strength of UNIOSIL currently stands at 309 and comprises 85 international personnel, 199 national staff/National Professional Officers and 25 United Nations Volunteers. In order to determine the number of staff required to perform the remaining tasks mandated by the Council, UNIOSIL conducted a section-by-section assessment of the remaining tasks and the personnel required to implement them. Those tasks include assisting the Government in its efforts to reform the Constitution, enhance democratic governance, strengthen the security, judicial and corrections sectors, promote human rights, strengthen women's participation in the political process and address the root causes of the conflict as identified by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

The mission will also continue to monitor and assess the political and security developments in the country, support policy dialogue, promote inter-party dialogue, facilitate the engagement of Sierra Leone with the Peacebuilding Commission and assist the Government in the conduct of the local government elections, which are currently scheduled for 5 July 2008.

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On the basis of the mission-wide review, it was determined that UNIOSIL could be downsized by 62 posts, representing 20 per cent of the mission's authorized staffing complement, by 31 March 2008, thereby bringing its staffing strength to 247 civilian staff. The 62 posts will comprise 15 international staff members (4 P-3 and 11 Field Service), 43 national staff and 4 United Nations Volunteers. Of the 15 international staff members, 4 are assigned to the mission's substantive sections, while 11 are assigned to its administrative and security sections. Of the 43 national staff, 8 are from the substantive component and 35 are from the administrative and security components. Of the four Volunteers, one is assigned to the substantive component and three to the administrative component.

To ensure that the mission retains the requisite capacity to effectively perform its remaining tasks, UNIOSIL is in the process of streamlining tasks within each section. In addition, the mission will transfer some of its activities, including the recruitment of United Nations Volunteers who will provide technical assistance to the National Electoral Commission during the elections, to relevant United Nations agencies.

Tasks to be performed by the remaining 80 per cent of staff

Until its mandate expires in September 2008, UNIOSIL will continue to implement the following key tasks set out in Security Council resolutions 1620 (2005), 1734 (2006) and 1793 (2007), namely:

- Assisting the Government in the conduct of local government elections. UNIOSIL will provide policy advice and technical and logistical assistance to the National Electoral Commission and the Political Parties Registration Commission. It will also assist the Government in defusing political and ethnic tensions and in promoting dialogue among key political parties, especially in the light of the political and ethnic divisions that were highlighted by the 2007 general elections, which may intensify in the period leading up to the local government elections in 2008. The mission will also assist in coordinating technical, financial and logistical support for the elections.

- Monitoring the security situation in the country and strengthening the capacity of the national security sector. UNIOSIL will support the Government's efforts to strengthen the capacity of the security sector, including the Sierra Leone Police and the Office of National Security. In its effort to assist in building the capacity of the police to provide effective security during the local government elections, UNIOSIL will advise and mentor the Sierra Leone Police in crowd-control management and polling centre responsibilities. It will also assist the police in specialized areas such as criminal investigations, airport and border security, civilian oversight and improving professional standards. A total of 22 United Nations police advisers are currently performing those functions. Between March and August 2008, five police advisers will depart from the mission without being replaced. The remaining 17 will depart by 30 September.

- Promoting transparency and accountability. UNIOSIL will promote good governance, including through measures to combat corruption and improve accountability. In this regard, the mission will offer policy guidance to the Government and the Anti-Corruption Commission in the implementation of the Sierra Leone anti-corruption strategy and its Improved Governance and Accountability Pact. UNIOSIL will also coordinate international support for building the capacity of Parliament.

- Monitoring and promoting human rights and the rule of law. UNIOSIL will monitor and report on the human rights situation in the country and assist in building the capacity of the National Human Rights Commission and in reforming the judicial and corrections sectors. The mission will also support the Government in the implementation of the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and in the preparation of reports and their submission to international treaty bodies.

- Promoting a culture of peace, dialogue and participation through United Nations Radio. Through United Nations Radio, UNIOSIL will continue to promote a culture of peace, dialogue and participation and encourage the holding of peaceful, fair and transparent local elections. United Nations Radio will also maintain its role of providing a forum for civic education, debate of national issues and balanced reporting on events nationwide. Plans for the transition of United Nations Radio assets into a national independent public service broadcaster, including a proposal for funding this transition, are being developed by UNIOSIL.

- Implementing resolution 1325 (2000). UNIOSIL will support national efforts aimed at building the capacity of the Sierra Leonean Government and civil society organizations to promote the empowerment of women and their participation in the decision-making process and the local council elections. The mission will also work closely with national stakeholders to reduce the incidence of sexual and gender-based violence.

- Facilitating the work of the Peacebuilding Commission. In its efforts to assist the Government in consolidating peace in Sierra Leone, UNIOSIL will facilitate engagement between Sierra Leone and the Peacebuilding Commission through the implementation of the Sierra Leone Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework adopted on 12 December 2007. The mission will also facilitate the implementation of projects under the Peacebuilding Fund.

Termination of the mission's mandate by 30 September 2008

Following the local government elections on 5 July 2008, UNIOSIL will gradually draw down its remaining personnel. It is envisaged that the drawdown will begin with substantive personnel, while the administrative and logistical staff needed to complete the liquidation process will withdraw last. It will be important to ensure that there is a smooth transition from UNIOSIL to the follow-on integrated political office referred to in my fifth report on UNIOSIL (S/2007/704).

I intend to submit to the Security Council any possible additional proposals on the mission's drawdown, as well as on the mandate, structure and strength of the follow-on integrated political office, in a report on UNIOSIL to be submitted in April.

I should be grateful if you would bring the present letter to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) **Ban** Ki-moon